

Wildlife in the Forest

Objective: Students will research wildlife species associated with different forest types.

Standards of Learning: Science LS.6, LS.7, LS.8, LS.9, LS.10, BIO.1, BIO.8
(Also 4.5 and 4.9, but lesson is designed for grades 6+)

Materials:

Computers with Internet access

Activity:

Divide students into small groups, assigning each group a forest type. Have each group use the VaFWIS web site

(<http://vafwis.org/fwis/?Title=VaFWIS+Species+Information+By+Land+Management&vUT=Visit> or) to generate a list of potential wildlife species living in their forest type. The following VaFWIS land use categories correspond with the Virginia forest types:

- 41. Deciduous forest – oak-hickory, maple-beech-birch
- 42. Evergreen Forest – loblolly-shortleaf pine, white pine, spruce-fir
- 43. Mixed Forest – oak-pine
- 61. Forested Wetland – elm-ash-cottonwood, oak-gum-cypress

Searching by land use category will generate an extensive list of potential species. From this list, each member of the group should find one species likely to live in their assigned forest type, by researching its typical habitat. It may helpful to give each group member a different class of animal – bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, etc. To begin, in VaFWIS, click a species, click Habitat, and scroll down to paragraph on Habitat Associations. This step should help to separate species living in very different forests within the same general category (e.g., spruce-fir vs. loblolly-shortleaf pine). Species information can also be found on the Virginia Natural Heritage Data Explorer (<https://vanhde.org/>).

After choosing a species, students should write a brief report summarizing the animal's typical food habits, habitat requirements, and life history.

Questions for discussion:

How does the animal you researched use a specific type of forest to meet its needs?
Besides the forest itself, what other habitat components does this animal need?
What successional stage (forest age) is most likely to meet the needs of the animal?
What are some forest management practices that benefit this animal?